

## MINUTES

### **Farmland Protection Program Durham Soil and Water Conservation District 721 Foster Street Durham, NC 27701**

Meeting Number: 01 (Farmland Advisory Board)    Date: January 15, 2009

#### **Advisory Board Present:**

Neil Frank- At Large  
Talmage Layton- Falls/Lick Creek VAD  
Bo Glenn, Open Space Representative  
Douglas Daye- Flat River VAD  
Allen Powell- At Large  
Kathryn Spann- Soil & Water Representative  
Billy Cooley, Farm Bureau Representative

#### **Others Present:**

Eddie Culberson, Director Soil & Water  
Lisa Marochak, Soil & Water  
Jennifer Brooks, Soil & Water  
Lynwood Faison, Soil & Water  
Jane Korest, Open Space Manager  
Wendy Seddon, Open Space  
Richard Morgart, Tax Administration

1. **Welcome** –Chairman Neil Frank called the Farmland Protection Advisory Board Meeting to order at 8:18 AM.
2. **Minutes** –Last months minutes were read by Soil and Water Representative Kathryn Spann. Open Space Manager Jane Korest made a correction to the minutes under the easement section. At Large Allen Powell made a motion to approve the minutes with the correction that Korest pointed out. Kathryn Spann seconded the motion. Motion passed without dissent.
3. **Workshop** –Administrative Officer Lisa Marochak gave the board an update on the Farmland Workshop. Marochak passed out a draft copy of the workshop agenda for the board to review. Marochak reminded the board members to call and sign up to attend the workshop before January 26<sup>th</sup>.
4. **Countywide Farmland Plan**- Jennifer Brooks with Durham Soil & Water reported that all of the contracts are signed and delivered so Gerry Cohn is on the payroll as of January 1<sup>st</sup>. Brooks reported that she and Spann went to the BOCC work session on January 5<sup>th</sup> to introduce Gerry Cohn and to tell them about the plan. Brooks reported that Cohn is in the collecting data stage and he will be compiling a list of people to talk with soon. Frank suggested that Cohn attend the Farmland Board meetings to provide updates on the plan.
5. **VAD Update** – Director Eddie Culberson reported that there has been 1 VAD application since the last meeting and that is for Ann Ross. The land is off of Glenn Road in Rougemont and she has 3 tracts that total about 30 acres. Vice Chairman Talmage Layton made a motion to accept the VAD application for Ann Ross for 30 acres. Open Space Representative Kathryn Spann seconded the motion. Motion passed without dissent. Culberson reported that other counties in the state are doing Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts where farmers sign a contract to not develop their land for 10 years. The Farmland Board discussed revising the Farmland Ordinance to include provisions for EVADs and otherwise, and suggested discussing the matter more at the next meeting.
6. **Easements**- Culberson reported that Mollie Walker would like to add her name to the list for Easement consideration.

Open Space Manager Jane Korest submitted a draft timetable for the Board's consideration for easement review. The Board adopted the proposed timeline, with the understanding that there would need to be some modifications for the initial federal grant cycle, given the late date already. This would allow for a more defined time cycle for

submitting easements to the state and feds. Korest suggested that the board form a subcommittee to meet and go over the conservation easements that are submitted to the board. The first subcommittee meeting will be held on Tuesday February 17<sup>th</sup> at 8:00am.

Talmage Layton requested an update on the McFarland easement, and reported that Mr. McFarland expressed concern to him that the process had taken so long. Korest reported that the title issues had been resolved in the beginning of January, but that the appraisal would now need to be updated. Korest reported that the appraiser recently passed away and that the appraisal firm reassigned the work, so that a new appraisal report was expected by the end of the month. After the appraisal is received, the packet would be sent to the federal government for approval, and that their processing time is at least 60 days. Powell expressed concern that the Board must be mindful about discussing farmers' personal business. Spann suggested that landowners receive frequent updates to keep them in the loop about progress or delays.

## **7. New Business**

**1. Election of Officers-** A motion was made by At Large Representative, Allen Powell to nominate Kathryn Spann as Chairman, Neil Frank as Vice Chairman and Bo Glenn as second Vice Chairman. Farm Bureau Representative, Billy Cooley seconded the motion. Motion passed without dissent.

**2. Letter from County Manager-** Chairman Neil Frank passed out a copy of a letter that the County Manager, Mike Ruffin sent to the Farmland Board. The letter stated that in the budget crunch they have taken away \$550,000 of the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Budget. Neil reported that what this means to the Farmland Board is that we do not have any county funds to use for Easements in the current fiscal year.

Open Space Manager Jane Korest reported that the money has already been set aside for all of the projects that they were working on last year that have already been approved by the Board of County Commissioners. Korest reported that the County Manager had told her that there was going to be some cuts in the County budget but she didn't know how much, so for the Carrington and Van Ellis Farms where the grant application deadline was December 5<sup>th</sup> she submitted the two grants to the State without matching County funds. Korest reported that the grant budget for these 2 farms proposed using 50% State Farmland grant money and 50% Federal Farmland Grant funds with the assumption that they will apply for the Federal funds this Spring.

Soil and Water Representative Kathryn Spann expressed concern that the Farmland Board didn't hear from Korest earlier about this issue in time to possibly have some impact as a board on the budget. Korest reported that she did share with the Budget staff that the cuts were going to have an impact on the current projects and programs the Board was working on this year. Korest reported that this was not a decision that she made; it was between the Budget Department and the County Manager.

Talmage Layton- Falls/Lick Creek VAD expressed concern that the Farmland Board can't be effective if others make significant decisions without first informing the Farmland Board.

Open Space Representative Bo Glenn suggested that the Board could adopt an email reporting arrangement with staff, but noted that the Board has not done this in the past. At Large Representative Allen Powell suggested that the Board continue to solicit applications even without the County funding in hand, and that we advocate for easement donations with reference to the available tax breaks. Powell suggested that the Board work to establish more communication with the County Commissioners.

The board discussed this matter in length but the conclusion was that the chairman and some of the members should meet with the County Manager to further discuss this issue.

## **8. Set Next Meeting Date** – The board set the next meeting date for Thursday, February 19th at 8:00am

9. **Adjourn** – With no further discussion or business, Chairman Neil Frank adjourned the meeting at 9:52am

Neil Frank  
Chairman

Talmage Layton  
Vice Chairman

Bo Glenn  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman

